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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, November 15, 1940.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "FOOD FACTS AND FADS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Today I'm bringing you some news that will throw a light on a few of the current food fads and legendsFads and fancies that may throw your diet off balance.

Here's what Dr. Helen Mitchell has to say about them. Dr. Mitchell, is research professor in nutrition at Massachusetts State College. Just now she is spending most of her time in Washington, D. C., working as a consultant with the Bureau of Home Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture, on the nutrition program in national defense.

Now to quote Dr. Mitchell in her own words--

"We're interested in what we eat. We worry about possible illness. We would like to believe that there was some particular food or some special diet that would give us a magic key to health and happiness. And we grasp at many a food fad.

"While these fads have served to make us diet conscious--they are not reliable guides to well-balanced meals. A fundamental knowledge of nutrition is our best possible protection against false ideas about food."

Dr. Mitchell goes on to say--"A little knowledge may be a dangerous tool.... when it's twisted around to back up extravagant claims for a certain food--a special diet--or a 'nutritive' preparation. Only too often scientific words are used to cover ideas that have no foundation in fact."

The science of nutrition, Dr. Mitchell feels, has made rapid strides forward in the last 25 years or so. "Ours is the first generation," she declares, "that has a chance to make use of these new scientific facts about food."

Though we haven't the whole story yet, she is greatly encouraged by what the American people already know about food---what it does for the body---why we must have certain vitamins and minerals---how much we need of the various food elements to help keep us physically fit.

Dr. Mitchell's advice is for us to find out as much as we can about nutrition and pass along sound scientific facts.

Now just a word about some of the food fads and fancies---in the light of the scientific findings.

For example---there's the old idea that celery and fish are "brain" foods. Actually, no one food can be turned into brain material, the nutrition experts say. It takes a variety of different foods to build and repair tissues throughout the body.

Then there are the notions that children are expected to believe.....The idea that carrots will make a little girl's hair curl---that spinach will make a little boy grow big and strong. Of course, carrots and spinach are both good foods-----and they should be included in the well-rounded diet. But these two vegetables can not perform miracles. Science has not found any relation between diets and curly locks,---at least not yet.

And as for good growth and normal development---it has been found that children need a good assortment of all the protective foods. Adults also need a well-balanced diet to keep the body functioning at its best.

And I'm sure you've heard people say---"We eat too many acid foods." And then you've watched them cross oranges, tomatoes, and other good foods off their diet---simply because these foods taste acid.

In reality, most fruits and vegetables are base-forming. (Again I'm quoting the nutrition experts). There's no need to worry about acid- and base-forming foods anyway. If you have a well-rounded diet that includes plenty of milk---eggs---fruits---vegetables, and cereals---with some meat, fish, or poultry.....the acids and bases will take care of themselves.

Then there's the fancy about the danger of eating acid fruits and milk at the same meal. It is true that the acid fruits may curdle the milk---but that's exactly what happens to the milk in the stomach anyway. The digestive juices are far more acid than the fruits you eat. So it's perfectly safe to eat cherries and drink milk at the same meal---or to use orange juice in a milk drink.

Another idea you sometimes hear is that you shouldn't eat different kinds of fruits together---because there is danger in combining the different acids. The nutritionists explain that there is no possible harm in fruit combinations. Nature itself combines different acids within a single fruit.

You hear of fads that say to eat no cooked foods---and you hear of fads that tell you to eat no raw foods. But for practical purposes, it's best to hit a happy medium. Fruits and vegetables may lose some food values in the cooking process---so it's a good idea to eat some of them raw.

However, cooking gives food a pleasing variety in texture and flavor. And cooking is the only way to make some foods suitable for you to eat. If you cook vegetables as short a time as necessary and make use of the cooking water---you can cut down the loss of food values.

Of course some food fads are harmless. But some of them take you off in the wrong direction in planning your diet. They may even raise your food bill. They may steer you away from the food values that you really need.

To quote Dr. Mitchell's final word: "You'll be farther ahead if you follow the foods designed to promote good nutrition, than to follow the fads and fashions in food that change with the season. If you must go in for fads, take it out in hats or a new hair-do. That won't do you any lasting harm. Tinkering with your diet may...."

